

Today is not only an historic day. It's a day with much history.

For more than a generation, some of the best and brightest have talked about this day.

35 years ago, Mayor Daley the First talked of building a third airport on Lake Michigan.

20 years ago, the FAA directed the State of Illinois to begin planning for a third airport.

18 years ago, Governor Jim Thompson convened a commission to begin planning for a third airport.

14 years ago, Mayor Daley the Second proposed building a third airport at Lake Calumet.

13 years ago, Governor Jim Edgar proposed building a third airport in the south suburbs.

Nine years ago, I ran for Congress on a platform to build a third airport in the south suburbs.

Two years ago, consultants were hired to look into building the airport through a public-private partnership.

One year ago, the consultants concluded the public-private partnership was viable, flexible, and the wave of the future.

Today we make history. Today, we begin to see something real emerging from all the talk.

Today, two world-class companies, the creme of the crop, top of the line, A Number 1, King of the Hill airport builders -- LCOR and SNC-Lavalin -- are here to formally announce that they are ready, willing, and financially able to build the third airport -- which we are calling the Abraham Lincoln National Airport at University Park.

These two companies -- who have successfully built, financed and operated airports around the world -- have studied this opportunity for two years. They have sliced and diced it; dissected and bisected it; checked high in the sky and deep in the soil. And, they have concluded,

that they want to invest their money, their time, their expertise and their reputation, here, in the State of Illinois.

You know, it is funny how things work out sometimes.

A crisis in our national aviation system is what brought all of us together. As whites and blacks, Democrats and Republicans, North Siders and South Siders, we are about to achieve something new and exciting that is in the best interest of our region, our state, and our nation.

And, when you think about it ... What could be more fitting for the people of Illinois, than the establishment of a new aviation center built in the spirit of our 16th president?

Lincoln Airport will bring needed new capacity to our local and national air travel system. It will bring economic development to an area that needs it. And it will bring balanced opportunities between the North Side and the South Side.

One thousand construction jobs in Phase I. Fifteen thousand private sector jobs after opening day. Two-hundred-thousand new jobs in the next generation.

And these are good jobs. Jobs that provide health care for our children; pensions for our seniors; tax base for our communities; and dollars for our schools.

This airport will bring tourists to our area, and low-cost travel options to our residents.

We have so much to be thankful for today.

First, I want to thank my friend and colleague, Congressman Henry Hyde, for his longtime support and unwavering leadership on this issue.

I want to thank the Mayors and residents of Elk Grove Village and Bensenville for their incredible vision and generous financial support, without whom we would not be here today.

I want to thank the South Suburban leaders for their steadfast support, resilience and cooperative spirit.

And, finally, I want to express our gratitude and sincere thanks to our

developers, LCOR and SNC-Lavalin, for their partnership and innovation. Today is a testament to what can happen when free-market ingenuity and expertise meet with public need and determination.

What we -- all of us here -- have established is a model for airports of the future; a design and financial plan that will be emulated and duplicated at future airports around the globe.

We can justifiably and proudly boast, it all began right here, right now. We are no longer the stepchild of the Region. We are the brainchild. Thank you.